

FIVE BOHEMIAN WINDOWS

Historical Vignettes in Pen and Ink



By

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ERRATA

Several errors have crept into the text. Kindly make the following corrections:

On Page 4 (Table of Contents)

1. Third Line of Number One:

"Wencelas" should read Wenceslas

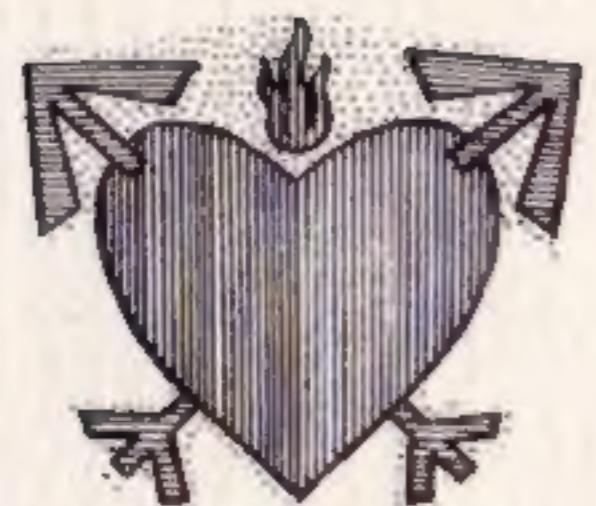
2. Second line of Number Four:

"Chelciky" should read Chelcicky

The penultimate line of the introduction, page 5:

"Anniversry" should be spelled Anniversary.

Please correct the same word on the last page, the sixth line of the fourth paragraph.



Beatae memoriae
Iohannis XXIII hoc
opusculum amoris
dedicatum est +

e. s. m.

To Mount Calvary -

Eric Shuey

FIVE BOHEMIAN WINDOWS

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INTRODUCTION

The five pen-and-ink drawings open windows into the history of the Kingdom of Bohemia. The spiritual landscape appears to be composed of Byzantine, Catholic, Hussite and Moravian mountain ranges and of plains reddened with the blood of religious wars. Many of the old wounds have healed but the scars are still visible.

"Art provides a vocabulary for religion." And symbols are the shorthand language of faith. Outstanding persons, like symbols, represent capsules of history and of the times they enliven and the stage they influence.

These five windows then, represent the vocabulary, the stenographic language and the capsulized history of Bohemia and Moravia, small regions in the heart of Europe.

I made the first drawing in 1947. As the years passed, I completed other drawings in the same format, and gradually there emerged the idea of a series. With some slight changes, they are now included in this booklet. The completed set, *Five Bohemian Windows*, is now in your hands, awaiting your meditative examination. I hope and pray that the historical landscape, sketched by quill and pen, does to some degree carry the inner continuity of a dialogue that spans a millennium.

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Anno Domini 1965, the 550 Anniversary
of the Martyrdom of John Hus.

GOOD KING WENCESLAS

An Interpretation

St. Wenceslas (ruled from 921 to 929 A.D.), first Christian ruler of Bohemia, grandson of St. Ludmilla, merged the remnants of the Iro-Scottish and Eastern Orthodox missions (the latter introduced into Moravia by Sts. Cyril and Methodius), and oriented Czech Christianity towards the Latin West. He was murdered in A.D. 929. This patron saint of the Kingdom of Bohemia has his shrine in St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. His feast day is September 28. Emperor Charles IV incorporated a portion of the patron's crown, including a thorn from the Crown of Thorns, in the new "St. Wenceslas Crown" which has been used at coronations ever since.

After the suppression of the independent national Church of Bohemia in 1620, religious refugees (Hussites and Moravians) arriving in hospitable England—where many of them were received into the Church of England—brought with them the story and legends of St. Wenceslas. One of these legends was made into a poem by William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898), who was a scholarly layman with a deep interest in Greek and Slavic Church history. Several of his hymns are translations from the Greek. Three of his hymns are in the Episcopal Hymnal, 36 ("What Child is This"), 52 ("As With Gladness Men of Old"), and 347 ("Alleluia! Sing to Jesus"). "Good King Wenceslas," set to a sixteenth century air by John Mason Neale (1818-1866), became a popular English Christmas carol.

On St. Wenceslas Day, Sept. 28, 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese sailor serving under the flag of Spain, discovered California. Holy Communion was celebrated in what is today San Diego.



GOOD KING WENCESLAS LOOK'D OUT ON THE FEAST OF STEPHEN.

26 Dec.

When the snow lay round about, Deep & crisp & even;
Brightly shone the moon that night, Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight, Gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither, PAGE, and stand by me, / If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder PEASANT who is he, / Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence, Underneath the MOUNTAIN;
Right against the FOREST FENCE, / By Saint Agnes' FOUNTAIN."

"Bring me flesh & bring me WINE, / Bring me pine logs hither;
Thou and I shall see him dine / When we bear them thither."
PAGE and MONARCH forth they went, / Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament / And the bitter weather."

"Sire, the NIGHT is darker now / And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how, / I can go no longer."

MARK my FOOTSTEPS, my good page, / Tread thou in them boldly:
Thou shalt find the winter's rage / Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod, / Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod / Which the SAINT had PRINTED;
Therefore, CHRISTIAN men, be sure, / Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the POOR, / Shall yourselves find BLESSING.





SAINT WENCESLAS

Saints Cyril And Methodius

An Interpretation

One thousand and one hundred years ago this season, two brothers of Thessalonica, Greece, Cyril and Methodius, set out for central Europe to carry Christ's Gospel and the Church's liturgy in the people's own language. This northward journey had momentous consequences for all Slav peoples of Central Europe, the Balkans, and Russia.

Cyril was born in 826 (at birth he was given the name Constantine which, upon assuming monastic vows, was changed to Cyril) and Methodius around 815. Both brothers studied at the Saint Sophia school in Constantinople. In A.D. 855 Cyril was sent on a mission to the Moslem Caliph Mutawakkil at Samarra, and in 861 to the Mongolian empire of the Khazars at Bab-el-Abwab (Derbend). The Khazars were Mongols converted to Judaism by exiled Babylonian Jews. While there Cyril met Armenian Christians whose script inspired him later to create a phonetic ("Glagolitic") alphabet for the Slavs.

In 862 the Moravian king Rastislav sent a delegation to the Byzantine Emperor Michael III asking him to send missionaries to his kingdom. A year later Cyril and Methodius arrived in Moravia, bringing with them a new alphabet expressly created for this mission, and their Slavonic translations of the Gospels and liturgical books. Building upon the foundations of earlier missionary activities of Iro-Scottish monks they converted the country rapidly to Christianity. They had to defend their liturgy in the vernacular in Rome where, in 867, they pleaded successfully their cause before Pope Hadrian II. Cyril died while in Rome. Methodius was then consecrated archbishop of Pannonia and Moravia and returned to his see. Although fortified with full papal authority, Methodius was imprisoned for over two years by the bishop of Regensburg. Pope John VIII secured his release and Methodius resumed his work, aided by the Patriarch of Constantinople. With the accession of Stephen VI, the Bavarian bishops, jealous of the influence of the Greek Church, persuaded Rome to forbid the use of the Slavonic Rite in 885. Methodius died the same year.

The missionary activity of these two "Apostles to the Slavs" had several lasting effects: (1) Directly and indirectly, it brought about the conversion to Christianity of Moravia, Croatia, Bohemia, and Bulgaria. (2) It gave the Slavs a written alphabet (The Glagolitic is still used in the Church-Slavonic rite, while the simplified "Cyrillic" is to this day the script of the Russians, Bulgarians, and Serbs). (3) It gave to the Slavs Holy Scripture and the liturgy in their own language. (4) Last but not least, the life work of Sts. Cyril and Methodius is one of the rare examples of full ecumenical cooperation between the Churches of the East and the West.



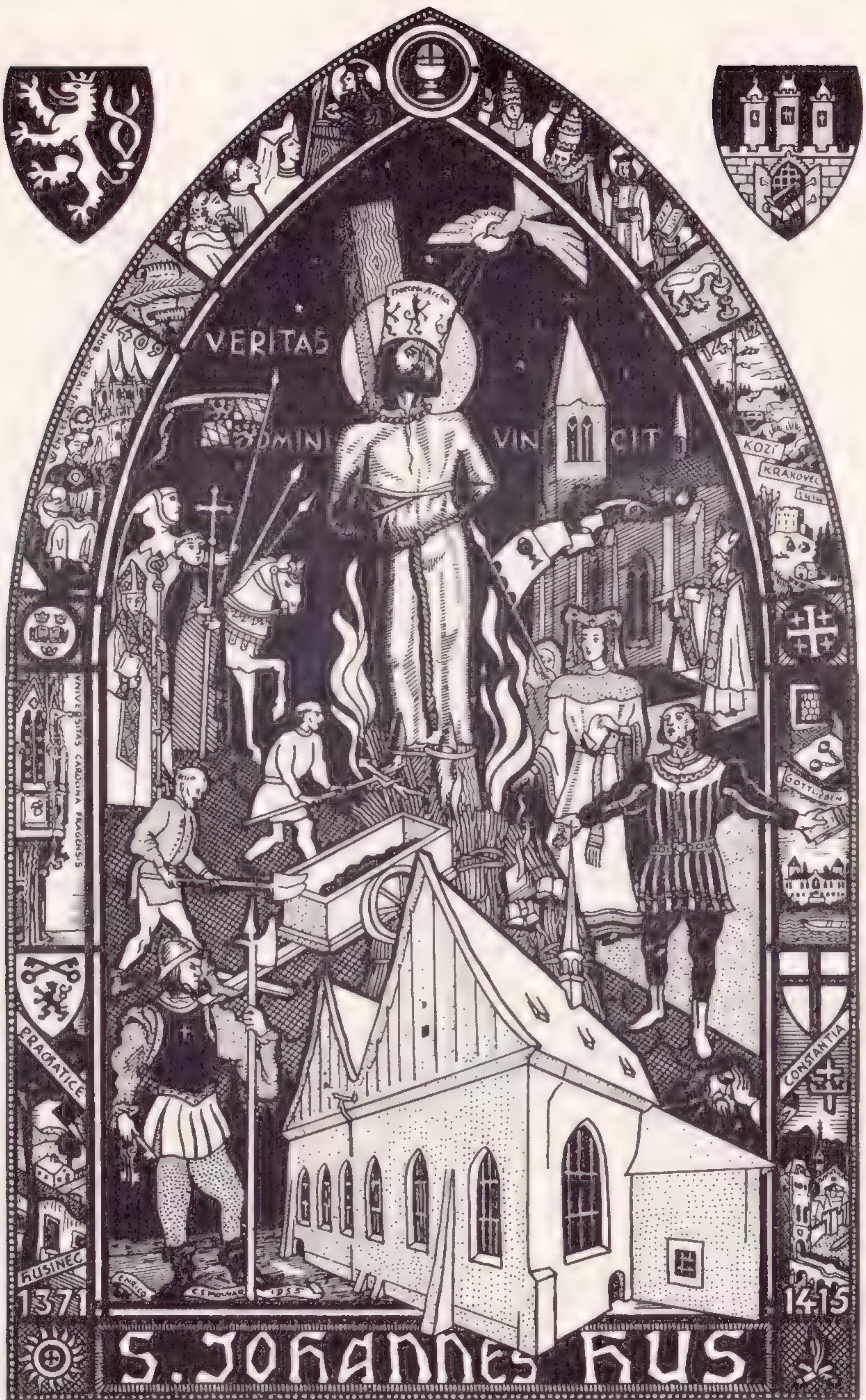
JOHN HUS

An Interpretation

The medieval contacts between England and Bohemia were by no means as scant as we might be led to believe. For example, in 1201, the King of Bohemia appointed Robert, an English Cistercian, to become Bishop of Olomouc in Moravia. In 1380, Richard II of England sent a delegation of noblemen to the Prague Court to ask Princess Anne, daughter of King Wenceslas IV, to become his wife. Anne accepted Richard's offer and went to England. She was followed by Czech students who studied at Oxford. In 1388, Lord Adalbert Rannconis, Canon of St. Vitus' Cathedral in Prague, established scholarships for Czech students at Oxford and the Sorbonne. The Bohemian scholars brought with them beautifully illuminated manuscripts which exercised some influence on English calligraphy. In turn, they brought back a lively interest in English affairs and a number of books by John Wyclif.

John Hus was born in Husinec in A.D. 1371. He studied in Prachatice and in Prague. He became Bachelor of Arts in 1393 and Master of Arts two years later. He was appointed Professor at the Caroline University of Prague. In 1400 he was ordained to the priesthood and a year later he was elected Dean of the University. After serving St. Michael's Church in old Prague he was appointed Chaplain of the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, where he was active for ten famous years. (The Chapel is portrayed in the lower half of the drawing). He read the works of Wyclif and, like him, became increasingly dissatisfied with the general state of the Church. He studied the Patristic literature, and advocated liturgical reforms, such as the liturgy in the vernacular, congregational participation through hymns, and frequent celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The Bible, the Church Fathers, and the Church Canons convinced him that the Church needed reforming. He was gradually won over to the conviction that the Holy Eucharist ought to be celebrated in both kinds as in the Apostolic times and in the Eastern Churches. (The Church in the upper half of the drawing is St. Martin's-in-the-Wall in Prague, where the initial act of the Bohemian Reformation, the Holy Communion in both kinds, was celebrated on October 28, 1414). In the end John Hus was excommunicated. He appealed to the Council of Constance whither he went in 1414, "protected" by an ineffectual Imperial Safe-Conduct. At Constance, Hus insisted on the Church's primary dependence on God and her independence from man. However, unable to secure impartial hearing, unjustly accused of blindly following and copying Wyclif, John Hus was condemned to a heretic's death, which was consummated on July 6, 1415, when he was 44 years of age. He became the saint of the Church of Bohemia. The Chalice and Host became her symbol and standard.

One hundred years before Luther, Bohemia became a country with the first independent national catholic Church. Known as the Utraquist Church during the conciliar days, she found an ardent defender in Peter Payne, an English Wyclifite who came over to Bohemia and, as a Hussite priest, pleaded the Utraquist cause at the Council of Basel. Later he almost succeeded in bringing about a union of the Church of Bohemia with the Church of Greece. But this premature ecumenical effort was thwarted by Islam's conquest of Constantinople.



PETER CHELCICKY

An Interpretation

Peter Chelcicky, whose life story is illustrated on the side panels from his birth in 1370 on the left to his death in A.D. 1460 on the right, is the spiritual father of the Unitas Fratrum, better known in the West as the Moravian Church. A free yeoman, influenced by the Hussite and Waldensian movements, he stepped himself thoroughly in the religious thought of his time. His activity coincides with the years of the Czech military exploits when the Hussite armies fought against the legions of many European nations. This battlefield glory did not excite his admiration because it was stained with blood. "Both sides are plain murderers in the name of religion," said he.

In A.D. 1419, repudiated by the Masters of the Caroline University of Prague of the question of moral lawfulness of war, Chelcicky replied, "No war is permissible because God never repealed his commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill.'" A little later he wrote *The Net of Faith*, which became a religious classic of the Bohemian Reformation. (It is symbolized in the lower half of the central panel). He began with the allegory of the New Testament story of the Apostles going out to fish. The net contains the catch, the little fish who represent "the saving yeast of Christianity." But — wrote Chelcicky — in A.D. 321, with the recognition of the Church by Emperor Constantine the Great, two big whales entered the net, one symbolizing the triumphalism of the papal Church, and the other "the corrupt Caesar State depending on physical force and coercion." These two whales kicked in the net until they tore it and, breaking the spiritual fabric of the pre-Constantinian Christian society, escaped into the Sea of Compromise. Only absolute, creative, nonviolent love can make the net of the true faith whole again.

Centuries later, the book of this lay theologian of the radical wing of the Bohemian Reformation fell into the hands of young Count Leo N. Tolstoy, (1828-1910), Russian novelist and lay theologian, leading him to formulate his own brand of Tolstoyan pacifism.

Like Tolstoy in the nineteenth century, and like Gandhi and Schweitzer today, Peter Chelcicky then, five centuries before our time, in the hour of the sword, dared to break his own.



JOHN AMOS COMENIUS

An Interpretation

John Amos Comenius ("Komensky") was born in Moravia on March 28, 1592. A member of the Unitas Fratrum (Moravian Church), he studied theology at the universities of Herborn and Heidelberg. In 1616 he was ordained priest, whereupon he served parishes in Prerov and Fulneck. Political upheavals cast their shadows on his early career. In 1620 the Kingdom of Bohemia, his native land, lost its independence in one of the first tragic battles of the Thirty Years War; after which he lived the life of an exile in many European countries. This forced exile became transformed into a real pilgrimage for the ideals of Christian unity, political freedom, and enlightened education. Whether he was in Hungary or in Poland, in Sweden or in England, in Germany or in Holland, Comenius the scholar and bishop worked unremittingly for the liberation of his country and administered the destinies of the scattered Moravian Church. Surrounded on all sides by war and rumors of war, Comenius, steeped in the faith of his fathers, suggested in *Via Lucis* (1642) the adoption of a universal language to overcome the legacy of Babel. In 1658 he proposed an international Confederation of Nations, a World Ecumenical Council of Churches, a Supreme World Court, and a universal reformed calendar; all this in a book called the *Pan-Orthosia*. His other book, *Orbis Pictus*, became indeed, the first illustrated children's textbook.

Comenius advocated fundamental reforms in education and a new approach to natural sciences. He believed that independent study and observation offered greater intellectual rewards and incentives than did constant reliance upon Aristotle or Pliny. He insisted that education should be free, universally available, and compulsory for every child. His textbooks, soon translated into more than 17 languages, were used in the early years of Harvard. While visiting England in 1642 he proposed the establishment of an international Scientific research center, to be called the "College of Light." Nothing became of it; indirectly though, the Royal Society was organized shortly after his visit. John Winthrop, Jr., offered to Comenius the presidency of Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass., but John Amos Comenius, the last Bishop of the Unitas Fratrum of Moravia, was already too tired. The pilgrimage was ended. He died in Amsterdam on November 15, 1670, and was buried in Naarden.



NOTES ON THE DRAWINGS

The first drawing, *Peter Chelcicky*, was completed in 1947 as an accompaniment for my seminary B.D. thesis (a commentary on and translation of Peter Chelcicky's *Net of Faith*).

Good King Wenceslas and *Sts. Cyril and Methodius* were made in 1962 and 1963 respectively, and were published in *The Episcopal Review* of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. They are reproduced here by permission of *The Review*.

I completed the drawing of *John Hus* in 1955, in time for the convention of the National Union of Czechoslovak Protestants of America, held in Chicago. The drawing was reproduced in a number of publications.

The figure of *John Amos Comenius* was completed in 1942 for the publication of the English translation of the latter's major work, *The Labyrinth of the World*, made by Professor Matthew Spinka, then at the Chicago School of Theology. The book was published in 1942, the 350th anniversary of the birth of Comenius. I have redrawn the figure, to fit it within the format of this series, in 1964.

Heraldry

The shields on either side of the Gothic windows represent: the Eagle of St. Wenceslas and the later symbol of Bohemia, the double-tailed Lion (p.7); Greater Moravia and Pannonia (p.9); Bohemia, and Prague (p.11); The Cleansing of the Temple and Non-Violence (p.13); and finally Moravia and The Netherlands (p.15).

